



File Code: 1950

Date: JUL 31 2009

Dear Reviewer:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Idaho City Ranger District (RD) Motorized Wheeled Vehicle Travel Management Project. The project area encompasses approximately 189,628 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands in an area that generally surrounds the community of Idaho City. The EA and accompanying maps are also available at the Boise NF Web site (<http://fs.usda.gov/boise>), and copies can also be obtained at the Idaho City RD at the address listed above.

Scoping for this project began in December 2008 and our records indicate that you had expressed an interest in this project at that time. Therefore, I am now notifying you of the 30-day opportunity to comment under 36 CFR 215. The purpose of this comment period is to provide you and other members of the public the opportunity to comment on the proposal before I make a decision.

#### Background

In 2004, the Chief of the Forest Service cited four major threats to NFS lands. One of these threats included "unmanaged outdoor recreation." To address this issue, the Forest Service developed a national strategy to evaluate recreational motor vehicle use on NFS lands. The strategy would help resolve issues such as damage to wetlands, wildlife habitat and fragile soils, disturbance to wildlife, spread of noxious weeds, and conflicts between recreationists. Following a national public comment process, this strategy was then formalized as new national travel management regulations and published as a "final rule" in the Federal Register in 2005. The final rule revises several regulations to require designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use on National Forests and National Grasslands. To meet the direction and intent of the Forest Service Travel Management Rule (TMR), every National Forest and Grassland unit is to develop or revise their travel management plan for motorized vehicle use by 2009.

Across much of the Idaho City RD, motorized wheeled-vehicle travel is already designated to specific roads and trails (see 2000 Boise National Forest Visitor/Travel Map). Because these roads and trails have been designated, and because motorized travel off designated routes is not allowed, no action is required to comply with the TMR for these areas. However, within "E" areas, motorized, wheeled-vehicle use is allowed on both established, but currently unauthorized routes as well as on Forest Service designated routes. To comply with the TMR in these areas, I need to designate these unauthorized roads and trails for motorized, wheeled-vehicle use.

In addition, following public comment during the scoping period, I expanded the original project area by about 30,640 acres to include some adjacent areas that provide good motorized-travel loop opportunities. Within these adjacent areas, several currently unauthorized routes have historically been used for motorized travel.

#### Alternatives and Decisions to be Made

The three alternatives analyzed in detail in the EA include Alternative 1 (no action - maintain the current management), and two "action" alternatives designed to meet the requirements of the TMR. These alternatives were developed and/or refined in part through earlier public comment. Alternative 2 would designate for motorized use an additional 66 miles in the authorized NFS trail system, while Alternative 3 would designate for motorized use an additional 146 miles in the authorized trail system.



### How to Comment on the EA

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of a legal notice in the *Idaho Statesman*, the newspaper of record for Idaho City District Ranger decisions. This legal notice is expected to be published on August 5, 2009. A "courtesy copy" of the legal notice is expected to be published in the *Idaho World*, also on August 5. Comments will be most helpful if they identify the specific actions you think are needed, why those changes should be made and how such a change would better meet your interests. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the only means for calculating the comment period for this analysis.

Written comments must be submitted to: District Ranger, Idaho City RD, 3833 Highway 21, Box 129, Idaho City, ID 83631; or by fax to 208-392-6684. The office hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments must be provided at the Idaho City RD office during normal business hours via telephone 208-392-6681 or in person.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to [comments-intermtn-boise-idaho-city@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-boise-idaho-city@fs.fed.us). Please put "Idaho City Motor Vehicle Travel Environmental Analysis" in the subject line of e-mail comments. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

Those who provide comments or otherwise express interest during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to the 36 CFR regulations and the April 24, 2006, order issued by the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana in Case No. 03-119-M-DWM. Each individual or representative from each organization that provides comment or otherwise expresses interest in the project must either sign the comments or otherwise verify identity in order to attain appeal eligibility.

For further information, please call the Idaho City RD at 392-6681 or visit the Boise National Forest Web site at <http://fs.usda.gov/boise>.

Sincerely,



BARBARA A. LEVESQUE  
District Ranger

Enclosure